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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 57/183 of 18 December 2002 on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. It updates the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the fifty-seventh session of the Assembly (A/57/324). The report contains an overview of recent developments and activities; more detailed updates by subregion, namely, East Africa and the Horn of Africa, Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, West Africa and southern Africa; information about inter-agency cooperation on thematic issues; and an overview of cooperation with regional organizations in Africa.

* A/58/150.

** The late submission of this text is due to the updating of information provided by field offices to reflect the most recent developments.

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Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	3
II.	Regional overviews	3–34	3
	A. East Africa and the Horn of Africa	3–10	3
	B. Central Africa and the Great Lakes region	11–21	5
	C. West Africa	22–31	8
	D. Southern Africa	32–34	10
III.	Specific areas of inter-agency cooperation	35–60	11
	A. Coordination of resources	35–37	11
	B. Security of refugee settlements and staff safety	38–42	11
	C. Assistance to and protection of refugee women and refugee children	43–49	13
	D. Education	50–51	15
	E. HIV/AIDS	52–53	15
	F. Environmental management	54–55	16
	G. Frameworks for durable solutions for refugees and persons of concern: linking relief, peace and development	56–58	17
	H. Internally displaced persons in Africa	59–60	17
IV.	Cooperation with regional bodies and initiatives	61–66	18
	A. African Union	61–62	18
	B. African Development Bank	63	19
	C. Intergovernmental Authority on Development	64	19
	D. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	65	19
	E. Southern African Development Community (SADC)	66	19
V.	Conclusion	67	20

I. Introduction

1. In early 2003 Africa was hosting 3.3 million refugees, some 32 per cent of the global refugee population. The largest African refugee groups continued to originate from Burundi, the Sudan, Angola, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Eritrea, followed by Liberia and Sierra Leone. Almost 350,000 African refugees were repatriated during the reporting period, mainly Angolan, Sierra Leonean, Burundian and Somali refugees. During 2002 major new refugee outflows were reported from Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic.

2. The "Agenda for Protection", adopted by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in October 2002[1] and subsequently welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/187, provided an overall framework for efforts to strengthen protection for refugees and persons of concern. The framework is also designed to reinforce international solidarity and burden-sharing for countries hosting refugees and intensify the efforts to secure durable solutions. In this context, innovative measures have continued to bridge some of the gaps between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development through the High Commissioner's "4Rs" concept. This approach envisages close collaboration among relief and development agencies in order to ensure a smooth transition through the key recovery phases of repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. During 2002 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also continued to support Africa-led and other multilateral initiatives, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the G8 Africa Action Plan and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. The Millennium Development Goals are being used increasingly to align UNHCR activities and strengthen coordination with other agencies.

II. Regional overviews

A. East Africa and the Horn of Africa

3. At the beginning of 2003, the subregion was hosting 940,000 refugees, mainly from Eritrea, Somalia and the Sudan. A complex array of political, humanitarian and socio-economic challenges continued to take their toll on some of the operations. The disastrous impact of drought on agriculture in the subregion was a major ongoing concern. An estimated 11.3 million people in Ethiopia and 2.3 million people in Eritrea faced immediate food shortages, giving rise to worries that this might lead to increased cross-border movements. In May torrential rains hit Kenya, southern Ethiopia and eastern Somalia, causing floods, landslides, extensive damage to property and subsequent displacement of affected populations.

4. Meanwhile, there was some progress on a few of the major political and humanitarian problems in the region, opening the way to pursue voluntary repatriation operations, notably for Eritrean and Somali refugees. Hopes of resolution of the civil conflict in the Sudan prompted tentative planning for future Sudanese refugee return programmes. The peaceful transfer of leadership in Kenya and in the self-declared autonomous region of north-west Somalia ("Somaliland")

gave hope for greater stability in the region. Political and military rivalries in north-east Somalia ("Puntland") were for the most part resolved, leading to the installation of an authority which appeared to be largely in control of the area, despite a few localized clashes. In Uganda, however, rebel attacks on refugee settlements displaced the entire Sudanese refugee population.

Repatriation to Eritrea and reintegration activities

5. The Cessation Clause for Eritrean refugees took effect on 31 December 2002. For refugees wishing to be exempted from the application of this measure, in September 2002 UNHCR launched an individual status determination process adjudicated by teams of international United Nations Volunteers and Sudanese lawyers. To facilitate the repatriation process, UNHCR arranged "go and see" visits to places of origin. Voluntary repatriation operations ran smoothly for the first half of 2002 but were temporarily stalled by the onset of the rainy season in July. Subsequently, the resumption of the cross-border movements was affected by an outbreak of hostilities in eastern Sudan and the Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR and the Governments of the Sudan and Eritrea was suspended. Consequently, only 19,000 Eritrean refugees were repatriated from the Sudan in 2002. Repatriation from the Sudan to Eritrea resumed once again on 23 June 2003 after UNHCR and the two Governments agreed to open a humanitarian corridor to enable return convoys to pass. In Eritrea efforts were reinforced to ensure the sustainability of return and to tend to the needs of the returnee-receiving communities, including initiatives to address critical needs in education, health, water and sanitation, income-generation and community services. A joint Government/United Nations recovery programme for returning refugees was formulated as part of these efforts.

Repatriation to Somalia and reintegration activities

6. In 2002 some 32,000 refugees returned to north-western and north-eastern Somalia, mainly from Ethiopia (29,600) and also from Djibouti (2,100). As a result, five refugee camps were closed in eastern Ethiopia. By the end of 2003 another two camps should close following the scheduled return of 39,000 Somali refugees from Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen. UNHCR will continue to assist the remaining Somali refugees who are from the most volatile areas of southern Somalia. In the areas of return, activities will focus on the rehabilitation of roads, water, health and education facilities and other related reintegration activities, in addition to the 91 Quick Impact Projects, in order to promote and support this repatriation operation. However, unexploded ordnance and mines in the returnee areas have been hampering reintegration efforts.

Sudanese refugees

7. The political scene in the Sudan was dominated in 2002 by the peace process, under the auspices of the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development. The signing of the Machakos Protocol between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) in July 2002 raised hopes for an end to the Sudan's civil conflict, which dates back to 1983. A contingency plan was prepared in coordination with other United Nations agencies for the return and reintegration of half a million Sudanese refugees from six neighbouring countries, if the peace holds.

8. In western Ethiopia, persistent insecurity in the Gambella region adversely affected programme monitoring and delivery of services by UNHCR and other partners. A total of 107 Sudanese refugees lost their lives in ethnic clashes during the second half of 2002. Tensions between Anuak and Nuer ethnic groups, both within the Fugnido camp and among the local community, erupted into large-scale violence in November 2002, resulting in 42 deaths. UNHCR and the Administration for Refugees and Returnees Affairs, the Government's implementing partner, began relocating 24,500 Sudanese of Nuer and Dinka ethnic origin from Fugnido to Odier. In Kenya clashes occurred between local people and Sudanese refugees in the Kakuma camp in June 2003, claiming 12 lives. The refugee transit centre had to be closed down and some 30,000 Sudanese refugees have been displaced from their homes within the camp. By the end of June camp activities had resumed and reinforced security is being sought to allow the refugees to return.

Uganda

9. On 5 August 2002 rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attacked the Achol-Pii refugee camp in northern Uganda, causing all 23,950 Sudanese refugees to flee south. Temporary settlements in Kiryandongo soon became overcrowded with these new arrivals, leading to health problems. The Government of Uganda accepted the relocation of 8,800 persons to Kyangwali, an existing settlement not far from the transit centre. The remaining population will be relocated to Ikafe and Madi Okollo once basic infrastructure is in place. Further LRA attacks in Adjumani in mid-2003 left 19 people dead and this climate of violence and insecurity has hindered the progress of the Self Reliance Strategy that was launched in 1999.

10. An estimated 9,900 Congolese arrived in the Bundibugyo and Nebbi districts of Uganda following ethnic clashes in the eastern Ituri province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in mid-May 2003. Some 524 of the estimated 9,000 asylum-seekers volunteered to move to Kyka II, an existing settlement; however, the majority refused to be relocated further inland, hoping to be able to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as the conflict ends. Despite the presence of the French Forces in Bunia and the reported relative security, there are as yet no signs of any mass return of these asylum-seekers to their places of origin.

B. Central Africa and the Great Lakes region

11. In early 2003 the 1.3 million refugees in this region were mostly located in the United Republic of Tanzania (690,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (333,000) and the Congo (109,000).

Central African Republic

12. In the Central African Republic, general insecurity prevailed amidst political, economic and social turmoil. A failed coup attempt in October claimed the lives of many civilians, compelling leaders of the Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC) to deploy troops to restore security in Bangui and monitor the border area between the Central African Republic and Chad where the rebels were allegedly operating.

13. UNHCR continued to provide protection and assistance to some 36,000 (mostly Sudanese) refugees in Mboki; 2,900 Congolese refugees in the Molangue

camp; and 10,200 urban refugees, mainly of Chadian, Congolese, Rwandese and Burundian origin. Chadians residing in Bangui continue to be victims of random attacks by local people who sometimes regard them as an "invading force". This suspicion is largely due to the Chadian army's heavy involvement in propping up the current Government, which took power in the March 2003 coup. Some of these Chadians have therefore sought protection and assistance from UNHCR.

Voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees

14. UNHCR moved from facilitating the return and integration of Rwandan refugees to promoting their voluntary repatriation in October 2002. By the end of 2002 some 23,800 Rwandan refugees had returned from the United Republic of Tanzania and 14,000 had returned from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Following the tripartite agreement signed between UNHCR and the Governments of Rwanda and Zambia in January 2003, the first group of 13 refugees arrived in Rwanda from Zambia in April 2003. In 2003 4,000 Rwandan refugees have been assisted to return so far, mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and also from Tanzania. This trend is likely to continue through 2003, particularly for the Rwandan refugees in Uganda.

Situation of Burundian refugees

15. The peaceful handover of power in Burundi has once again raised hopes of possible return home for Burundian refugees living in exile. Of the estimated 574,000 Burundians who remain outside their country, some 371,000 are located in camps in the United Republic of Tanzania and thousands more live among local populations, mainly in the United Republic of Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2002, some 53,000 Burundian refugees returned home, including 31,000 persons who repatriated from the United Republic of Tanzania with UNHCR assistance. The coming into effect of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee on 1 May 2003, in addition to the bill on the punishment of crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, is expected to contribute to creating a climate of reconciliation which will enable a conducive environment for repatriation. Other contentious issues, such as the reform of the army and participation of all the armed elements in the peace process, remain impediments to achieving durable peace. However, the arrival of the African Union peacekeeping force in Burundi should further improve the security situation.

United Republic of Tanzania

16. Over the years, as a result of armed conflict and civil strife in neighbouring countries, the United Republic of Tanzania has continued to host some of the largest refugee caseloads in Africa. The presence of such large numbers of refugees has posed major challenges to the international community in terms of providing protection and assistance. Rising insecurity in refugee-hosting areas has also caused the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania increasing concern in recent years. In 2002 there were some reports that regional authorities might have been encouraging return to Burundi and limiting new arrivals. However, the Government has since provided reassurances during statements made at the UNHCR Standing Committee meeting in June 2003 and again the following month during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva, that there would be no recurrence of such incidents. Another challenge has been the inability of

humanitarian agencies to provide a complete food basket for reasons ranging from insufficient funding to pipeline breakdowns. As a result, some refugees may have returned prematurely to unsafe areas of Burundi in search of food. The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has allocated a new site for the Congolese refugees in the Kigoma region as a result of inadequate capacity in the most recently developed Congolese camp at Lugufu. However, the new site will require considerable investment before refugees can be settled in it and UNHCR will seek resources for this from the international community.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

17. The reactivation of the Lusaka Peace Accord and the commencement of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City, South Africa, eventually led to the conclusion of an inclusive peace agreement on 17 December 2002. Other significant developments were the historic 30 July pact ending the war between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and the bilateral agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, which promised the withdrawal of Ugandan troops. The Democratic Republic of the Congo-Rwanda agreement gave renewed impetus to the Rwandan voluntary repatriation exercise. In 2002 UNHCR was able to assist more than 10,000 Rwandan refugees to return home from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a further 6,000 refugees had repatriated by June 2003. UNHCR also cooperated with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo within the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, reunification and repatriation process of former combatants returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Rwanda.

18. However, the persistently volatile situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, combined with the gross human rights violations perpetrated against the civilian population, militated against the anticipated repatriation of more than 350,000 refugees of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from neighbouring countries. Furthermore, the humanitarian community was unable to respond adequately to the protection and assistance needs of over half a million internally displaced persons in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

19. In Angola, following the signature of the ceasefire agreement between the Government and rebel (UNITA) forces, UNHCR entered into tripartite arrangements with the Governments of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the voluntary repatriation of some 180,000 Angolan refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2002 more than 19,000 Angolans returned spontaneously from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while another 5,300 have been assisted to return since repatriation movements commenced on 20 June 2003.

20. To further consolidate and enhance the refugee protection mandate, in February 2003 the President officially launched the new refugee law that forms the basis for the National Eligibility Committee and a National Appeal Committee in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

21. In spite of the ethnic massacres in Bunia in May and the insecurity in the east of the country, the political environment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has evolved positively in the past months. The investiture of the transitional Government on 1 July and the enlarging of the mandate of the United Nations mission in the country have re-ignited hopes of progress towards greater stability.

C. West Africa

22. West Africa was marked by conflict, upheaval and population displacement within and across national borders in 2002. At the beginning of 2003 the region hosted some 1 million persons of concern to UNHCR, including 522,000 refugees.

23. In Sierra Leone, the end of the civil war in 2002 paved the way for the return of 76,000 refugees. In contrast, more than 100,000 Liberian refugees arrived in neighbouring countries in 2002 as fighting raged between government forces and the rebel factions. Despite a ceasefire agreement signed in June 2003, intense fighting continued; however, since the change of leadership and the arrival of peacekeeping troops, international humanitarian agencies are gearing up to move back into the country in order to assist the stricken population.

24. In Côte d'Ivoire, an attempted coup d'état in September 2002 was the precursor to full-scale civil war, which led to the displacement of thousands of people and a breakdown in basic services and economic activity in more than half of the country. With the signing of the ceasefire agreement in January 2003, the overall security situation in Côte d'Ivoire has somewhat stabilized, although the humanitarian situation is still characterized by displacement.

25. Other significant caseloads are those in Guinea, which hosts an estimated 182,000 refugees, mostly from neighbouring countries. In Cameroon, most of the 17,000 Nigerian refugees who fled from the northern state of Taraba following ethnic clashes in January 2002 remain in the country and receive limited assistance. In Nigeria, some 4,400 refugees, mostly Liberians and Sierra Leoneans, have been receiving assistance from UNHCR, out of an estimated total of 7,400 refugees living in the country. In the Gambia, most of the 12,000 refugees are of Senegalese and Sierra Leonean origin. In Senegal, hopes for a lasting solution to the Casamance problem faded as fighting resumed between government forces and the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance, which is seeking the autonomy and independence of the southern province of Casamance. The country hosts some 22,000 refugees, mostly Mauritanian nationals for whom durable solutions continue to be sought. Mali is hosting over 9,000 refugees and some 7,600 refugees were recently registered in Guinea-Bissau. Since the beginning of 2002, the office in Benin has been overseeing UNHCR operations in Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo. Refugees in these four countries enjoy a relatively stable political situation and an open policy of local integration. In Ghana a regional resettlement centre for West and Central Africa has been established and UNHCR has assisted in the reactivation of the Ghana Refugee Board.

Sierra Leone

26. Sierra Leonean refugees have been returning home gradually following the establishment of peace in Sierra Leone in January 2002. Once the entire country had been declared safe (with the exception of one area bordering Liberia), UNHCR decided in September 2002 to begin actively promoting return in conditions of safety and dignity, and implementing the "4Rs" strategy (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction). At the same time, renewed hostilities in some host countries have compelled many Sierra Leonean refugees to return home. Since the start of the return operation in September 2000, 213,000 refugees have been repatriated voluntarily, 115,000 of whom were assisted by UNHCR. In total, some

300,000 Sierra Leoneans have benefited from assistance in returnee areas through community-based projects.

27. Sierra Leone is host to 63,000 Liberian refugees, 43,000 of whom are living in camps and 8,300 in urban areas. Liberian refugees who arrived recently are being provided with protection and assistance, while local settlement and resettlement opportunities are being identified for those who arrived earlier.

Liberia

28. In Liberia, the continuing war has uprooted families and destroyed villages and community infrastructure in many parts of the country. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons, 275,000 Liberian refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, mostly to Guinea. In May 2003 war spread to the capital, Monrovia, creating further population displacements and an extremely serious humanitarian situation, as most agencies had to suspend activities and leave the country. Since 9 June 2003, UNHCR national staff have been providing limited protection and assistance under very difficult circumstances. Following the arrival of peacekeeping forces, the main objective of UNHCR will be to re-establish its international presence in Liberia and gain access to persons of concern throughout the country, including Sierra Leonean and Ivorian refugees, as well as Liberian returnees and internally displaced persons, in order to seek durable solutions and, in particular, actively promote the repatriation of the 46,000 Sierra Leonean refugees, given the favourable situation in their country.

Côte d'Ivoire

29. Côte d'Ivoire has been facing social and political tension since the December 1999 military coup d'état, the first in the country's history. The semblance of normality that returned, following presidential and legislative elections in 2000, was shattered in September 2002 by a second attempted coup d'état that provoked a full-scale civil war. The ensuing conflict created unprecedented social upheaval with significant population movements both within and across its borders. The western provinces, which were hosting some 70,000 refugees at the time of the attempted coup d'état, were particularly affected by the fighting. The suspicion that foreign countries were involved in the coup d'état attempts has led to a rise in xenophobia. UNHCR has been working to enhance the safety of some 45,000 refugees, including 43,000 Liberian nationals, in their current locations to meet basic protection and multisectoral assistance needs, as well as to carry out screening, registration and issuance of documentation. The relocation of refugees from camps near conflict areas to new sites and the resettlement of the most vulnerable refugees to third countries remain part of the current operations of UNHCR in Côte d'Ivoire.

Guinea

30. Most of the refugees in Guinea arrived following the armed conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone and the attempted coup d'état in Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002. UNHCR has been providing assistance to some 56,000 Liberians living in camps, placing emphasis on self-reliance and income-generating activities like agriculture. To counter the problems of the militarization of camps, UNHCR continued to transfer Liberian refugees from Kouankan in the south to the more centrally located

Albadariah camps. By the end of June 2003, some 6,000 persons had been transported out of the risk area.

31. The main aim of UNHCR activities in Guinea is now to pursue and promote the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees. Over 40,000 Sierra Leonean refugees were repatriated from Guinea in 2002 and another 26,000 returned during the first half of 2003. Some 35,000 Sierra Leonean refugees remained in the country by mid-2003. Meanwhile, the Nzerekore region of south-east Guinea has been hosting growing numbers of refugees fleeing the hostilities in the western provinces of Côte d'Ivoire. As of June 2003, there were approximately 6,400 Ivorian refugees in Guinea, most of whom were living in camps.

D. Southern Africa

32. By early 2003, southern Africa was hosting 685,000 people of concern to UNHCR, including 320,000 refugees, most of whom are from Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The consolidation of peace in Angola meant a redirection of the main programmes in Zambia, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from care and maintenance and local integration to voluntary repatriation. Prospects for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have also raised hopes for stability in the country and the possible repatriation of the Congolese refugees, most of whom are living in the United Republic of Tanzania (140,000), the Congo (84,000), Zambia (49,000) and Burundi (40,000). The situation in Rwanda has created prospects for the return of the refugees, most of whom have found asylum in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (20,500) and Uganda (19,000) and from the southern Africa region, particularly from Malawi and Zambia. Critical food shortages continue to affect the region and the World Food Programme has placed at 6 million the number of people in need of support for 2004.

Voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees

33. At the end of 2002, UNHCR was assisting most of the Angolan refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (109,000), Zambia (91,000) and Namibia (16,000). The consolidation of the peace process, along with the gradual creation of favourable conditions in Angola, have led to the spontaneous return of 130,000 refugees to Angola from June 2002 to June 2003. On 20 June 2003, coinciding with World Refugee Day, UNHCR launched its organized repatriation programme, aiming to assist the return and reintegration of a further 240,000 refugees in 2003 and 2004. Refugees are repatriating to safer areas where risks of exposure to mines are minimal and measures such as Quick Impact Projects are helping to reintegrate returnees in their home villages.

Zambia

34. At the end of June 2003, Zambia was hosting over 250,000 refugees, the largest number of refugees in the southern Africa region. Of these, some 153,000 were being assisted by UNHCR. Most of the refugees originate from Angola (190,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (54,000) and Rwanda (5,600). In addition to supporting voluntary repatriation for refugees, the Government of Zambia has, with the support of the United Nations Office for Project Services,

UNHCR and the international community, continued to implement local integration projects within the framework of the Zambia Initiative. Under a holistic approach aimed at linking development and relief assistance, refugees and host populations have together identified four priority sectors: agriculture, health, education and infrastructure and natural resources management. Implementation of relevant projects started early this year. The Government has encouraged active donor involvement in the Zambia Initiative and so far the pilot project has mobilized donations for priority projects in the Western Province.

III. Specific areas of inter-agency cooperation

A. Coordination of resources

35. The Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) continues to be an important coordination and strategic planning tool in Africa, involving United Nations humanitarian agencies and partner members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. In 2003 the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat launched 14 Consolidated Appeals in Africa, proposing programmes for a total of US$ 1,647,371,331. By mid-year, total funds available stood at $529,171,635, representing 32 per cent of requirements. The limited level of resources seriously hampered the ability of humanitarian agencies to respond to massive humanitarian needs resulting from widespread insecurity, drought, shortage of food and water, and limited access to populations in areas controlled by rebel forces, with damaging consequences for the coordination effort. The funding shortages thus led to the reprioritization of activities affecting almost every sector of the CAP.

36. Some progress has been made, nevertheless, in developing partnerships for a more effective humanitarian response. In West Africa, initiatives were undertaken under the auspices of the Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General to pursue strategies for an integrated humanitarian response, which took account of complex subregional dimensions. In Angola, Eritrea and Sierra Leone, for which the Consolidated Appeals included significant transition elements, humanitarian and development agencies worked closely with Governments in planning and coordinating their interventions, from repatriation through to the reconstruction phase. In post-conflict situations such as these, effective humanitarian and development aid are elements vital to maintaining stable environments in which reconciliation can take root.

37. Timely and sufficient funding of Consolidated Appeals remains imperative. Concerted efforts by the international community to provide the political and financial support are therefore essential for humanitarian aid to reach those in need and to ensure that the aid provided satisfies minimum international standards.

B. Security of refugee settlements and staff safety

Security of refugee settlements

38. Maintaining the civilian nature of refugee camps and settlements requires a robust approach that allows the effective intervention of relevant actors. The

Conclusion on the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, adopted in 2002 by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,[2] was a significant expression of international concern regarding the security of refugees. This Conclusion called for, inter alia, enhanced collaboration between UNHCR and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

39. At the field level, UNHCR and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have focused their cooperation on situations where refugee-populated areas are at risk of becoming militarized. In 2002 agreements were reached on the establishment of special camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for former combatants from the Central African Republic. They also concern the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration process of former combatants returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Rwanda. In Sierra Leone, a task force on internment has included government officials, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, United Nations agencies and other international organizations. It has supervised the Mapeh internment camp, which opened in October 2002 and now accommodates more than 330 Liberian combatants. In February 2003 a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Sierra Leonean police. It covers all aspects of UNHCR operations, including security screening at borders, police deployments in camps and host communities and cooperation on asylum applications by demobilized persons at the internment camp. In Guinea, the long-standing partnership with the Government of Canada resulted in the deployment of Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officers to work alongside and train Guinean counterparts on community policing as a means of improving refugee camp security. In Côte d'Ivoire inter-agency consultations with the Government and concerned parties have also covered measures to combat threats to the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum.

40. At the Headquarters level, UNHCR has participated regularly in the Small Arms and Light Weapons Forum and has worked with the Department for Disarmament Affairs in support of coordinating action on small arms, advocating measures to combat the flow of illicit arms. UNHCR has also worked with the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on issues relating to safe returns and reintegration and ensured the inclusion of refugees' and returnees' needs in the overall mine risk awareness education strategy through its participation in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. Another move to enhance partnership on refugee security issues has been the secondment of UNHCR staff to the African Union.

Staff safety

41. The safety and security of humanitarian workers remained a serious concern in 2002. There were 186 security incidents involving UNHCR staff worldwide, of which 66 were in Africa, an increase of some 30 per cent in comparison with 2001. These incidents ranged from abductions and physical assaults to vehicle hijackings and thefts. During 2002 UNHCR introduced a series of improvements to its management of security, including a directive signed by the High Commissioner in November 2002, which committed managers and staff to high standards of accountability for the safe conduct of operations. In support of this policy, UNHCR has improved the training available for both security specialists and line staff and has invested $3 million in rigorous implementation of Minimum Operational Security Standards. More than half this amount was spent in Africa. It also

developed an interactive CD-ROM, "Basic Security in the Field", on behalf of the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator and has been an active participant in the Inter-Agency Security Management Network.

42. The network of 39 Field Safety Advisers supporting UNHCR field operations during 2002 included 18 who were deployed in Africa. Together with Staff Welfare Officers, these Advisers conducted security audits leading to improved security plans and targeted field safety training. To ensure better management of staff safety and security, including early warning and risk assessments, all country offices are required to participate in the local United Nations Security Management Team.

C. Assistance to and protection of refugee women and refugee children

Refugee women

43. In line with the global consensus that women's rights and gender equality are prerequisites for peace and development, UNHCR has continued to attach high priority to the needs of refugee women. Efforts to give visibility to their needs have included integrating refugee women's capacities into planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as part of overall programming. A 10-year review of the implementation of the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on their Protection was completed in 2002, as well as the revision of its Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, which are now being disseminated. Moreover, indicators for monitoring the impact of the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women, announced in December 2001, are currently being developed as part of ongoing efforts to mainstream these important, practical issues into UNHCR programmes.

44. Cooperation with specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has included joint efforts to provide refugee women with training in their basic rights and in leadership skills, as well as the training of male trainers in gender-analysis mainstreaming. Inter-agency cooperation has also focused on incorporating a gender equality approach within humanitarian and development work, notably with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in areas such as training, microfinance and economic empowerment, leading refugee women towards self-sufficiency.

45. The prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence has also been a priority, with a series of regional workshops for UNHCR and implementing partners. Sexual and gender-based violence committees and working groups with UNHCR staff and relevant actors were also created in various camps. The involvement of committed men in the struggle to combat gender-based violence and to promote gender equality has gradually found new voices and encouraged other men and women to rethink their perceptions and behaviour with respect to masculinity and male/female responsibility. In Guinea, for example, the Men's Association for Gender Equality has been promoting women as leaders through community sensitization campaigns. Women's community centres have also continued to develop, giving women an opportunity to discuss issues of empowerment, participation and legal frameworks, to combat sexual and gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS and to undergo skills training and to engage in income-generating activities.

Refugee children

46. In close partnership with other United Nations agencies, NGOs and other operational partners, UNHCR has pursued its work to meet the rights and needs of refugee children.[3] A strategic dialogue took place between UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on potential collaboration in the different phases of refugee and returnee operations, including emergency and protracted situations. In countries of West Africa, especially Côte d'Ivoire, the partnership with UNICEF was strengthened through the signature of a memorandum of understanding in March 2003. Also in Côte d'Ivoire, plans for a joint study on the economic and sexual exploitation of children, including refugee children, were made with the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour in the second semester of 2003. In East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, inter-agency meetings on child protection brought together participants from NGOs and governmental services as well as the African Union, the International Organization for Migration, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF and UNHCR.

47. The Action for the Rights of Children training and capacity-building programme was reinforced in several regions in Africa. In the southern Africa region, an Action for the Rights of Children Steering Committee was established comprising UNHCR, UNICEF and the Save the Children Alliance. Cross-border training took place in the context of the Angolan repatriation operation, addressing critical issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, unaccompanied and separated children and other children at risk, HIV/AIDS and landmine risk and awareness.

48. Refugee children continued to be exposed to military recruitment in several ongoing conflicts in Africa. In the first quarter of 2003 UNICEF reported that an estimated 3,000 children were involved in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire alone. A range of actions were taken in that country to prevent and respond to the military recruitment of children, such as detailed profiling, issuance of refugee cards, identification of vulnerable cases and revitalized informal education activities. In Guinea and Sierra Leone, psycho-social support and counselling services were provided to ex-child combatants.

49. UNHCR continued its participation in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises and took part in its field mission to Sierra Leone and Liberia in October 2002. The revised *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response*, issued by UNHCR in May 2003, now contains a chapter on refugee children that highlights categories of children at particular risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and violence and provides specific strategies for prevention and response. Sexual and gender-based violence workshops were held in various countries, which generated a number of follow-up activities at the national level. For example, in South Africa, UNHCR and a local NGO supported a skills training programme assisting adolescent refugee mothers to develop and implement their own business plans through a mentor programme and a local microfinancing institution. In Kenya, girl-support groups target adolescent girls and young adults under 25 years of age; their members are also peer educators and form part of the support network for sexual and gender-based violence survivors in their respective communities and schools.

D. Education

50. UNHCR advocates education as a basic right and a sustainable tool for the protection of refugees. In Africa, these activities have helped to ensure access to primary education and supported access to further education, where appropriate, while enhancing basic survival skills. A set of new Education Policy and Field Guidelines have been developed and consultation seminars have been conducted in West and East Africa, with the participation of government officials and NGO staff. In West Africa, this has led to plans for coordinated and harmonized programmes in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

51. Inter-agency cooperation has also been key in promoting education among the displaced populations. The Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) Steering Group and its Working Group on Minimum Standards has begun a process that will lead to the development of minimum standards for improving the quality and accountability of refugee education programmes, many of which are in Africa. UNHCR has also worked closely with UNICEF, UNESCO and INEE on the promotion of girls' education. The Peace Education Programme, endorsed by INEE, has been operating in nine countries in Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda. It comprises both formal and non-formal education and reached more than 100,000 children and 5,000 members of communities in 2002. Similar programmes will be implemented in Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Ghana as soon as funding becomes available. HIV/AIDS, mine awareness and environmental education have also been introduced in various refugee educational programmes. Post-primary and higher education has generally been supported through earmarked and privately funded scholarship schemes. To strengthen post-primary refugee education programmes worldwide, a memorandum of understanding has been agreed between UNHCR and the Refugee Education Trust (an independent fund). The Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize Scholarship Programme provided 97 refugee scholarships for secondary education in Ghana and Uganda. The Albert Einstein Academic Scholarship Programme for Refugee Students (funded by the German Government) provided over 500 scholarships for further education in 23 countries in Africa.

E. HIV/AIDS

52. Prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS must be seen as an essential component of the overall protection of refugees. Together with sister United Nations agencies, UNHCR combats the stereotypical perception that "refugees bring AIDS with them", as this can lead to discriminatory practices. UNHCR has been an active member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on HIV/AIDS in Emergency Settings as well as the Inter-Agency Advisory Group on AIDS. Under the Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS and Refugees for 2002-2003, UNHCR has worked closely with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and national AIDS control programmes in refugee-hosting and returnee countries. Moreover, UNHCR has been coordinating HIV/AIDS, food and nutrition programmatic research in refugee camps with WFP and UNICEF. Increased ties with numerous academic institutions have also resulted in collaboration in southern Africa with Columbia and Harvard Universities on HIV/AIDS and refugee issues.

UNHCR also worked closely with the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium and numerous NGOs on HIV/AIDS issues throughout the world. Finally, UNHCR has been in close consultation with the World Bank, the Gates Foundation and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

53. Evaluation and planning missions undertaken in Angola, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia have revealed a wide variation of standards, quality and comprehensiveness among HIV/AIDS programmes being implemented in refugee situations, owing mainly to the lack of funding and technical expertise. Basic and culturally appropriate educational materials in local languages are also lacking. As each refugee situation is unique, these programmes need to be adjusted accordingly. All countries evaluated under these missions have now received funds to standardize, improve and expand their HIV/AIDS programmes. A comprehensive HIV/AIDS plan has, for example, been introduced for Angolan refugees and returnees, in response to the concern that Angolan refugees returning from high HIV prevalence host countries could bring HIV with them, exacerbating the relatively low HIV prevalence in Angola.

F. Environmental management

54. Promoting sound environmental management in refugee-affected areas is a priority for UNHCR, in line with the broader efforts of other United Nations agencies and national and international NGOs. To mark the International Year of Freshwater and this year's World Environment Day theme, "Water — two billion people are dying for it", UNHCR launched various activities to generate awareness of the value of water, such as planting trees, cleaning camps and raising awareness among refugees about the need to protect and improve the physical environment.

55. One example of efforts to promote environmentally sensitive behaviour is the Refugee and Returnee Environmental Education Programme, a joint UNHCR and UNESCO initiative, which started in 1995 with a pilot programme in the refugee camps in northern Kenya. The programme has now been expanded to include Ethiopia, Djibouti, the Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia and aims to develop a range of environmental education materials and approaches for both refugee and local schools. Country-specific studies to assess the socio-economic impact of refugees in hosting communities have been undertaken in partnership with other actors. In the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, the mission of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, co-led by UNHCR and UNICEF, was dispatched in late 2002. The negative impact on security and the environment and increased competition for socio-economic benefits were noted along with the positive impact, such as increased levels of governmental and bilateral support for the development of local infrastructure, demand for various goods and services and greater levels of productivity by refugees with skills. In Côte d'Ivoire, a similar impact assessment was conducted in 2002. An inter-agency mission has also visited the Sudan to investigate the rehabilitation of refugee-affected areas in the eastern part of the country.

G. Frameworks for durable solutions for refugees and persons of concern: linking relief, peace and development

56. Along with the Economic Commission for Africa, the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for Africa and various development agencies, UNHCR has continued to lend support to the priorities of NEPAD and to give careful attention to recommendations under the peace and security cluster of the G8 Africa Action Plan. These have called for support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees and to countries emerging from conflicts, through post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, as co-convenor of the United Nations cluster group on peace, security and governance, based in Addis Ababa, UNHCR submitted a proposal earlier this year for the establishment of a standard humanitarian recovery framework. Another important step, aimed at facilitating linkages between humanitarian and development issues, was taken in April 2003, when UNHCR joined the United Nations Development Group. This will allow a closer alignment of objectives with the work of the Development Group on transition issues, protracted refugee situations, Millennium Development Goals and HIV/AIDS. In June 2003 similar development issues were raised at the international symposium on refugees in Africa, held in Tokyo, to raise awareness and mobilize broader support for refugee matters.

57. In parallel with these developments, UNHCR has formulated programming approaches known as Development Assistance to Refugees (DAR) and the "4Rs". These are being used in close cooperation with development agencies to address needs of refugees in various protracted and post-conflict situations. DAR aims to improve burden-sharing for countries hosting large numbers of refugees through additional development assistance, while promoting self-reliance and a better quality of life for refugees and refugee-hosting communities. The policy of promoting refugees as agents for development can bring development opportunities for the local communities and host governments concerned, as in Zambia and Uganda, where efforts have continued to build skills and empower refugees, along with the local community. Together with ILO, UNHCR has also reviewed its policy on microfinance for refugees and completed a joint training manual entitled *Introduction to Microfinance in Conflict-Affected Communities*.

58. Examples of the "4Rs" approach in post-conflict situations have included those in Sierra Leone and Eritrea, where joint strategies have been developed with the United Nations country teams, local authorities, NGOs and local communities. In Sierra Leone, this integrated approach has been used for the reintegration of displaced populations, including refugees being repatriated from Guinea. In Eritrea, an Integrated Recovery Programme, of which "4Rs" is a major component, has been developed through the joint Government/United Nations Thematic Group on Recovery, under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process. A "4Rs" workshop was also organized jointly by UNHCR and UNDP in Geneva in June 2003, with the participation of UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, ILO, the World Bank and donors.

H. Internally displaced persons in Africa

59. At the end of 2002, there were 4.6 million internally displaced persons of concern to UNHCR worldwide, of whom 702,000 were in Africa, particularly in

Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. As the humanitarian situation deteriorated in Liberia, many of the estimated 300,000 internally displaced persons were trapped in inaccessible areas. Since their situation is similar to that of refugees and returnees, UNHCR plans to bring them protection and assistance through an inter-agency framework. In Côte d'Ivoire, an ad hoc group nominated by the United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Coordination Committee has developed a strategy for internally displaced persons in the country. In agreement with other United Nations agencies, UNHCR has coordinated responses to some 100,000 internally displaced persons on behalf of humanitarian actors in Guiglo and Tabou, based on inter-agency assessment missions and plans of action. Some 8,500 internally displaced persons in Guiglo have been provided with shelter, food, medical care and non-food items, and an internally displaced persons transit centre is being constructed with a capacity to accommodate 3,150 persons. WFP will provide food to the internally displaced persons transferred to this transit centre.

60. In November 2002, an inter-agency mission to the Sudan was undertaken by 11 agencies and 4 NGOs. The mission was framed within the principles spelled out in the recently formulated policies on internally displaced persons by both the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement, which have, to a large extent, been rooted in the Guiding Principles. The mission also assisted the United Nations country team in developing a strategy for the displaced population. In Somalia, the United Nations country team has made efforts to promote the Guiding Principles with the partners involved in the peace negotiations.

IV. Cooperation with regional bodies and initiatives

A. African Union

61. Close cooperation between UNHCR and the African Union has continued in a number of areas relating to refugees. Measures to improve implementation of the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa witnessed an important step in the form of a review of national legislation on refugees in selected States members of the African Union, also designed to lead to specific recommendations. The African Union has also begun a review of the 1969 OAU Convention, along with all other treaties engaging the African Union. Another important development was the signing, in May 2003, of a memorandum of understanding between the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and UNHCR, designed to strengthen cooperation and promote and protect the human rights of refugees and other persons of concern under their respective mandates. This adds support to the Kigali Declaration, adopted on 8 May 2003, by the first African Union Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Africa. The Declaration requested relevant organs of the African Union to ensure the inclusion of human rights, humanitarian principles and other legal protection measures in peace agreements in order to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees and other displaced persons.

62. Cooperation on post-conflict reintegration and recovery is also being fostered by working with NEPAD to develop a framework for institutional collaboration with UNHCR and other United Nations agencies. Moreover, the African Union's Coordinating Committee on Assistance to Refugees, bringing together donors and

other key players in humanitarian action in Africa, is involved in efforts to stimulate the Union's refugee programmes, while promoting the broader objectives of the NEPAD framework.

B. African Development Bank

63. Cooperation between the African Development Bank and UNHCR has included programme formulation missions in a number of post-conflict countries, such as Eritrea and Sierra Leone. In April 2003 the Bank proposed the establishment of a Regional Peace and Development Fund, identifying UNHCR as one of the Fund's partners. It aims to establish quick-disbursing and appropriately targeted mechanisms for regional post-conflict rehabilitation, social reintegration and development, and could therefore help to ensure the inclusion of the needs of refugees and returnees into longer-term development initiatives.

C. Intergovernmental Authority on Development

64. For some time, UNHCR, UNDP and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have been combining efforts to rehabilitate infrastructure and promote reintegration activities, as part of long-term solutions for refugees in the subregion, and enhancement of the local capacity to prevent and manage humanitarian crises. In this context, UNHCR has contributed to establishing a health desk in the headquarters of IGAD, under the initiative of the World Health Organization, which is intended to provide technical support to health ministries in the seven States members of IGAD in tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other health problems that contribute to humanitarian crises in the region.

D. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

65. The memorandum of understanding signed by UNHCR in November 2001 with ECOWAS has led to active cooperation on various aspects of protecting and assisting refugees in the region, while seeking political solutions to the causes of displacement, including peace talks on specific situations, such as that of Liberia.

E. Southern African Development Community (SADC)

66. A regular exchange of information has taken place between UNHCR and SADC on asylum issues. SADC has recently identified a number of key areas for action, such as security, freedom of movement, poverty alleviation and HIV/AIDS, all of relevance to refugees. These have been the subject of discussions at the ministerial and parliamentary levels, at which UNHCR has been able to raise issues relating to, inter alia, forced displacements and humanitarian assistance.

V. Conclusion

67. **A series of peace initiatives in 2002-2003 have raised hopes for solutions to refugee situations in various African countries. Elsewhere, renewed fighting and violations of human rights have dashed such hopes and destroyed all efforts towards durable solutions. Yet enhanced partnership within the United Nations system and among States and other operational partners has sought to open new opportunities for solutions for those who need them most. But more needs to be done. More resources need to be mobilized for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities to mend the fragile infrastructures of countries in transition or those hosting protracted refugee situations. The integration of conflict-affected communities within programmes for socio-economic development, income generation and capacity-building is also urgently needed. Humanitarian and development actors must show coherence in coordinating their strategic processes to uphold standards and ensure the complementarity of their initiatives, in line with the spirit of the reform under way within the United Nations. For their part, Governments, civil society and the international community in general must demonstrate increased awareness of the many complexities affecting refugee problems in Africa. Only then can lasting solutions be found.**

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 12A* (A/57/12/Add.1), para. 21 (a).

[2] Ibid., para. 23.

[3] See also the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to unaccompanied minors (A/58/299).